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Internationalization, Internalization, and Intersectionality of Identity

A Critical Race Feminist Re-Images Curriculum

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PINAR (2007) IDENTIFIES INTERNATIONALIZATION AS the third historical moment in contemporary U.S. curriculum theory, emerging after the field's reconceptualization from curriculum development to curriculum studies. The movement from curriculum development to curriculum studies forced a "paradigm shift" (Kuhn, 1962) from bureaucratization to the interdisciplinary. Curriculum, at this stage, is "replaced by a multi-discursive academic effort" (Pinar, 2007) toward its understanding: auto/biographically, historically, theologically, racially, politically, aesthetically. Such understandings have expanded curriculum through experiences, past present, and future, in terms of what we know, what we need to know, and who determines what we need to know. Curriculum, from a reconceptualist stance, bears the question of what knowledge is worth knowing (Schubert, 1985).

Internationalization of curriculum inquiry grew out of forces of globalization (Carson, 2009). Such forces have presented a dangerous loss of control over teaching as educators "respond to political pressures for accountability in internationally competitive test results" (Carson, 2009, p.146). These pressures have, often, led educators to succumb to the institutionally internalized conceptions of curriculum as standards, leaving behind reconceptualist notions of the autobiographical nature of curriculum. Such internalization has moved the social identity of teachers from intellectuals to workers or technocrats, following a prescribed set of instructions or procedures to deliver information deemed as curriculum by bureaucrats vastly invested in capitalism toward personal benefit:

While reconceptualization shifted the ground of curriculum studies away from its institutional and instrumental roots in curriculum design and development, [it did so] in order to focus on understanding curriculum as an interdisciplinary text that enables an interpretation of our personal and collective lives ... (Carson, 2009, p.146)

This would place the desires of the teacher and the learner center, rather than marginalized, in determining whose knowledge is worth knowing. This shift re-places/re-imagines the teacher as intellectual and the curriculum as a co-constructed body of ever-evolving knowledge center on the total experience—past, present, and future.

Throughout the history of American education, forces within bureaucratic institutions of education have been instrumental in the development of a curriculum (Apple, 1995, 1999, 2002; Pinar, 2012) usually designed to educate children who possess little to no voice (Michie, 1999) in what knowledge is worth knowing (Schubert, 1985). This educational internalization bears little to no connections to its students, their communities, or the world around them (Apple, 1995; Ayers, 2001; Castenell & Pinar, 1993; Pinar, 2012). Educators, including teacher-educators, are often complicit to such power relationships (Apple, 1995; Ayers, 2001; Ellsworth, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 2001) as they adhere to and abide by cultural and political mechanisms that maintain such internalization. For teacher-educators, this could mean silencing of a praxis and scholarship designed to promote a curriculum *with* a complicated conversation (Pinar, 2012).

However, internationalization has the power to move curriculum from the competitive global race to a collective conversation. Noel Gough (2003) states

Internationalizing curriculum inquiry might best be understood as a process of creating transnational “spaces” in which scholars from different localities collaborate in reframing and decentering their own knowledge traditions and negotiate trust in each other’s contributions to their collective work. (p.68)

This possesses the potential for educators to set aside the notion of “one best curriculum”, leaving behind what Anderson-Leavitt (2008) identifies as the “international obsession with international rankings of learning, with learning defined as achievement on a particular set of international achievement test” (p.363). The reframing and decentering of knowledge traditions could lead to educators’ collaborative efforts toward curriculum building centered on their experiences and the experiences of their students.

But, in many U.S. schools, particularly those located within urban, rural, and/or economically impoverished communities, teachers often do what they are told. To make matters worse, schools, colleges and departments of education prepare and develop pre-service and in-service teachers in ways that implicitly and explicitly fuel the cars of the international competition. State and national accreditation requirements have placed schools, departments, and colleges of education in a position where they may know better but feel compelled not to do better when it comes to Pinar (2007) and Gough’s (2003) notions of internationalization. Scholars may research, present, and/or publish information that supports this re-imagination of curriculum but the persistence of curriculum as standards in the context of teaching and learning in public schools could be the result of limited meaning interactions between these teacher-educator/scholars and public school teachers. There is little space for reconceptualization and internationalization of curriculum. There is little space for the voices and experiences of educators and their students.

This poetry/paper article is a re-accounting, a poetic counterstory in curriculum, of the praxis of an African American female teacher-educator working against internalized notions of curriculum as standards by re-imagining curriculum through the lives of third grade students and her teacher education colleagues. Using critical race feminism (Berry, 2010; Berry & Mizelle, 2006; Wing, 2003) as her framework, the author will describe how she moves curriculum from

internalized to connected, collective, and introspective. The author will provide her rationale for the necessity of such movements in curriculum and will conclude the paper with a discussion about the possibilities that exist in such re-imagination.

Why Critical Race Feminism

As a self-described Black American woman with multiple and intersecting components of identity, I live with the full knowledge that there is no one-way of living, learning, being, and teaching. The politics and race and gender, in isolation, create a “complicated conversation” (Pinar, 2012) centered on otherness, particularly in the context of public education. Combined, possessing identities which bring race and gender to the forefront bear multiple historical, social, and political complexities. These considerations reflect autobiographical nature of past, present, and future—what we know, what we are learning, and what we hope to know. These considerations are viewed through the lenses of the multiple identities I possess. Through this on-going and continuous experience, I have become increasingly aware that such multiplicity and intersectionality can exist for many individuals, particularly in the context of education. However, the lived experiences of educators and students alike are silenced. Their identities as teacher/student, neighbor, friend, woman/girl, man/boy, etc... is rarely, if ever, considered as knowledge worth knowing in the educational endeavor.

Critical Race Feminism (CRF) is a feminist perspective of critical race theory. As an outgrowth of critical legal studies and critical race theory, CRF acknowledges, accepts and addresses my Black experiences as different from those of my brothers (critical race theory) and my womanhood as different from those of my sisters (feminist theory). CRF operates at the nexus of race and gender:

Race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination—that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different. (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242)

Like critical race theory, CRF focuses on the issues of power, oppression and conflict; however, it is centralized in feminist theory, “feminist efforts to politicize experiences of women and antiracist efforts to politicize experiences of people of color have frequently proceeded as though the issues and experiences they each detail occur on mutually exclusive terrains” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). It also leans on many other tenets/elements of critical race theory: (1) addressing essentialism and anti-essentialism/intersectionality; (2) the normalization of race and racism; (3) addressing interest convergence; (4) dismantling color-blind notions of equality; (5) addressing race as a social construction; (6) using storytelling/counterstory telling for voices-of-color. Anti-essentialism/intersectionality, normalization and ordinariness of race and racism, and counter- storytelling are key elements in CRF.

In addition to anti-essentialism and intersectionality of identity, CRF addresses the complexities of race and gender with notions of multidimensionality. These components of CRF recognize that we not only have multiple ways of being and living but that these ways of being and living often intersect with one another. Our intersectional identities “as both women and of color within discourses” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244) have been shaped to respond to one or the

other. As a result, “women of color are marginalized within both” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244). Our lived experiences as Black women cannot be holistically comprehended “by looking at race or gender...separately” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244). Additionally, individuals possessing similarities in being and living do not always experience their identities in the same ways.

Finally, CRF values both abstract theorizing and practice. CRF acknowledges the need to be thought-full about who we are, what we do and why we engage in the ways we do. Additionally, as an advocate of CRF, I also acknowledge the necessity to practice what I preach. Articulating the importance of recognizing educators’ and students’ multiple and intersecting identities within the educational lived experience is one thing. Engaging in what Wing (1997) calls a multiplicative praxis speaks volumes about such recognition. A multiplicative praxis requires considerations of all the ways of being when considering action (practice) and reflection upon such action from the perspective of those we serve.

Prelude to the Counterstory

As a Northern-born Black American daughter of a Bajan professional serviceman and an African American female educator with Cherokee and Irish ancestry, complexity of identity began at birth. With a 1970’s childhood, I was expected to be feminine and feminist (Berry, 2012). I was expected to possess multi-ethnic racial pride and national pride. My parents emphasized academic excellence, community service, and high moral standard. Their influence upon me is part of my many life stories.

As a result, I consider myself a servant-scholar. I firmly believe that much of my work must positively serve others. As an advocate of critical race feminism, a large part of my service is the promotion of voices typically silenced in the educational endeavor. One of my service commitments is a weekly volunteer opportunity at a local elementary school. While located less than half a mile from the university where I serve as a faculty member, this Title I school is also physically situated less than two blocks from a public housing project. Yet, it is a community school. So, while I live two blocks from the east side of the university campus, it is also the elementary school for children living in my neighborhood.

Most of the students attending this K-5 school receive free or reduced lunch, effectively placing the socioeconomic status (SES) at poverty for 99% of the student population. Additionally, 98% of the students attending this school are African American. A slightly smaller percentage of the teachers (90%) are African American. Both administrators are African American women.

I spend much of my time volunteering as a teacher’s assistant in a 3rd grade classroom. Since this is a benchmark year for assessment and promotion or retention, much of what occurs in this classroom is centered on preparation for the State’s standardized test. Students spend hours sitting at their desks engaged in tasks that are intended to build their vocabulary and increase their reading comprehension and mathematical computation skills. Little of what occurs on this classroom (or the other 3rd grade classrooms) bears any connection to the lived experiences of teachers and students. Every lesson begins with a recitation of the standard(s) to be covered for that day and the task(s) assigned to that standard.

The Methodology

Auto-ethnography was the methodological process utilized to collect data to construct this counterstory. While it is clear that an ethnography is the study of a culture, an auto-ethnography is the study of a culture to which the researcher is a member. Jones (2005) indicates that “autoethnography works to hold self and culture together” (p.764). Ellis (2004) clarifies that auto-ethnography is: “Research, writing, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social. This form usually features concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection ... [and] claims the conventions of literary writing” (p.xix).

Understanding auto-ethnography means understanding that when the researcher discusses the culture to which s/he is a member, they are not only telling their own story but also telling the stories and sharing the realities of others who are also members of their cultural group. You see, counter/story does not function, live, exist, in isolation (Harris, 1997). It is intertwined with others’ stories and counterstories.

My membership in the cultural groups identified in this counterstory is, technically, accurate. At the university, I serve as a faculty member within the College of Education. Many of the faculty members within the department where I am assigned are involved in a community-based project. However, their roles are as “experts”, “leaders”, or “advisors”. While most said little or nothing when they learned of my involvement in the local elementary school, a couple questioned why I wasn’t providing some form of professional development to the teachers. My positionality as servant assisting the teacher makes my membership to this cultural group different.

As an African American woman and member of the local community, my identity as a member of the cultural groups in the school is clear. Many of the teachers in this school are African American women and the two administrators are African American women. Additionally, I live in the community from which most of the students come. However, I am a volunteer and, unlike the teachers, I can enter and depart upon my choosing. I do not have to prepare daily lessons nor write discipline reports. I assist the teachers based on their needs. This could mean engaging in a standards-based curriculum and pedagogical practices designed to help students focus on excelling on the state standardized test. My professional and personal beliefs and values clash with these practices, everyday. My positionality as a scholar un-mandated to be present in the school and opposing such practices makes my membership to this cultural group different.

However, based on the definition of auto-ethnography used for this work, I am a member of the cultural groups identified in this counterstory. I am telling my story. And, as stated earlier, my story does not live in isolation (Harris, 1997). It does, in fact, co-exist, with those who co-create the stories of all of my identities. In honor of this simple recognition, the methods by which this data was collected were identified not only by the researcher but also by the individuals who allowed me to share on their work.

To tell this counterstory, two elements of data collection were utilized in this work: field notes (with memos and jottings inserted) and a reflective journal. Field notes were used to capture factual information of events as they occurred. It was the primary third grade teacher and her colleagues who (1) encouraged and facilitated the data collection and (2) placed parameters on the documentation to be collected. Excluded from the data were meeting minutes, student information, class lessons, and student and teacher artifacts. I spent one full school day

per week for 20 weeks during the school year. Most of those days were spent in the classroom of one third grade teacher. Some of the time was spent in grade level department meetings, lunchroom duty, and library resource; all of these out-of-classroom events maintained focus with third grade students.

A field note document was constructed to annotate information for the day. The form included space for the following information: date, time/time of day, location of event, number of students present, teacher(s) present, topic of lesson/discussion, materials used. I maintained field notes simultaneous with assistance with instruction and other classroom-related activities as assigned to me by the classroom teacher. This field note document also included space for memos and jottings. The memos annotated key ideas and themes that emerged from the observed events. The jottings were my personal thoughts and inquiries regarding the observation/experience.

The reflective journal provided a space to consider the meaning of all that I had experienced during the course of the day while in the school. This journal includes thoughts, feelings, and considerations of events from theoretical and/or philosophical perspectives. In short, the reflective journal allowed me to make meaning from the events I had experienced.

The analysis of this work occurred in a two-step process. Both steps are ways to approach analysis and interpretation as noted by Wolcott (1994). Step one of the process involved a process for analysis Wolcott refers to as “highlight your findings” (p.29). In this process, I focused on the analysis of the field notes. This process requires the researcher to make a myriad of choices “in looking at some things rather than others, taking note of some things rather than others, and in subsequently reporting some things rather than others” (p. 29). In the beginning of this research process, more attention was given to the key ideas and themes that emerged from the observed events. As analysis and observation occurred more simultaneously, reconceptualists’ notion of curriculum theory in the context of internationalization took on sharper focus in my observations, memos, and jottings as themes of uniformity, routine, and ritual emerged.

The second step follows Wolcott’s (1994) notion of “turn to theory” (p.43) as a method of interpretation. In this case, counter-storytelling aspect of critical race feminism served to re-frame or re-position the themes that emerged from the field notes. I didn’t want to re-story the familiar refrain offered in the U.S. version of globalization for education. Using critical race feminism as an interpretative lens for both the field notes and the reflective journal notes gave counterpoint to the mainstream melody about what happens in our schools.

The Counterstory

Sum of All Her Parts: Living, Learning and Teaching

Welcome, welcome, welcome, uh,
 Who are you, again?
 Entering this ivory tower --- of sin and education,
 Shame of the nation (Kozol, 2005)
 And, who ever heard of a multi-ethnic Black American woman?
 Cherokee, African, Bajan, American, Northern, Urban
 Seeing isn’t always believing and what you see isn’t always what you get

I am servant-scholar, educator, researcher, writer, thinker, and yet
Tears of the pain I feel learning how our teachers and children get swept
Aside make my papers wet
With grief and anger at those who marginalize,
Trivialize
Scandalize
Our names, our worth, our stories, our histories,
Our identities
Inextricably tied to one another
And to our education, to go further
Welcome, welcome, welcome to our school
Full of rules
For children and their teachers
Which feature
Standards, standards, standards rather than curriculum
For some
Who think and believe
Conceive
Standards as curriculum
Homework, practice tests, little children with in-school suspension,
Behavior modification
Little red cards worn around their necks
With little gold stars and little black marks and
No demarcation for frustration,
Irritation,
And the silencing of their stories in the learning land.
Children learning how to live
And forgive.
I listen to their stories.
“Share with me, please”
Hoping to understand, before and after I leave.
For, with each week
When I depart, my heart
It breaks
For the sake, of the children and teachers
Who need leaders
Of curriculum to listen
To them.
Welcome, welcome, welcome
And, connect that school to us?
I wonder about trust.
Who are we to enter their space?
How do we come to understand the race,
The competition,
The frustration,
Of education focused on the comparison?

And, who are you, school, department, college of education?
What is your motivation?
Don't you suffer the same indignation?
States
And NCATE
Silence your voices
Leave you with few choices
About how education
Should look, feel, sound, taste, and touch
To schools, communities, and such
Or, are you part of the bureaucracy
That practices diplomacy
With falsity?
Where are your stories?
Where is the multiplicity
Of identities?
How do you honor histories
Of the political,
The gendered and racial
While recognizing the institutional
Barriers and walls
That face us all?
The servant-scholar
Educator
Researcher
Writer
Wonders
Ponders
Considers
All the ways her academic life
Fails to understand the urban, impoverished school in strife
Hoping, that in listening to children's stories of their knowledge makes her midwife
To the world of education as it should be.
Free,
Collectively,
Constructively,
Building a curriculum upon whose knowledge should be,
Importantly,
Centered for a world of living,
Learning,
And teaching.

Rationale: Why Connect Curriculum, Critical Race Feminism, and Auto-ethnography

In its simplest form, the connection between reconceptualists' notions of curriculum, critical race feminism, and auto-ethnography is the story. In reconceptualists' notions of curriculum theory, the story is autobiographical. "Curriculum theory is, in effect, a form of autobiographically informed truth-telling that articulates the educational experience of teachers and students as lived" (Pinar, 2012, p.35). My truth reveals the story of struggle, pain, and positionality as a servant-scholar and educator functioning in what could be perceived as contested educational spaces.

The notion of the truth-telling story is evident as a central tenet of critical race feminism: counter-storytelling. The notion of the counterstory leans heavily upon anti-essentialism, recognizing that there cannot be one narrative for any social or cultural group. Critical race feminism acknowledges the inter-connectedness, inter-relational, inter-dependent nature of our stories. In short, telling my story as a teacher-educator engaged in the schooling experience relies heavily on exposing, at least, part of the stories of my colleagues, the elementary schoolteachers and their students.

Auto-ethnography allows the telling of a cultural story by a member of the cultural group. In this case, this poetic counterstory reveals elements of two cultural groups of which I am a member. While my membership in both groups creates some personal dis-ease, it exist.

Conclusion: Next Steps

The relationships I have formed during the course of the school year with the teachers and students at this community school have helped re-define my position within this school community. I intend to continue to contribute to this school and to the third grade teachers and students of this school. I hope to continue to learn from them and to continue to build closer, tighter connections in our stories. This would allow the type of internationalism—laying aside knowledge traditions to engage in the collective work—to operate at a local level. Instead, what I experienced in this school spoke to the first movement of curriculum theory—curriculum development; much of what occurred aligned with the works of Bobbitt, Thorndike, and Tyler (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2000). Interactions between students and teachers were scientifically structured endeavors to be tested for reliability and validity and had little to do with pedagogy and learning. Yet, in one-on-one conversations and grade-level department meetings, teachers expressed a desire to engage in collective work. They wanted to engage in dialogue and practices they believed would be beneficial to students as well as themselves as professionals. Engaging in such internationalism has the potential to alleviate internalized institutional notions of curriculum as standards.

My work and connection in this school has influenced two of my colleagues to become involved with this school. They are determining how best to serve this school with their expertise and energy. My work with this school has also led to conversations about a collective effort to support this community school. But, in what ways can this College of Education use this experience to engage in a paradigm shift about who determines what knowledge is worth knowing? Involvement in this kind of endeavor does not fit neatly into State and NCATE requirements for teacher education programs. And, it requires us, as teacher-educators, to serve

the community school and center our identities as learners. It will require us to place the teachers, administrators, parents, and children of this school community as experts.

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